

From: D'Agostino, Anthony <adagostino@stpatrickcenter.org>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 8:35 AM CST
To: Scoggin, Yusef <scogginy@stlouis-mo.gov>; Bryson, Jared <Jared.Bryson@ccstl.org>; Nancy Cross <crossn@stlouis-mo.gov>
CC: Goossens, Savanna <SavannaGoossens@stpatrickcenter.org>; Poole, Megan <mpoole@stpatrickcenter.org>; D'Agostino, Anthony <adagostino@stpatrickcenter.org>
Subject: RE: Outreach Interference

Yusef,

Thanks for the email and your continued work at the Riverfront. You described several concerning issues in your email. Without getting into all the weeds, I have listed the two most concerning items:

1. *The engagement by SPC Outreach staff was not informed and incorrectly described in-patient treatment along with other shelter/housing placement options offered as not immediate.*
2. *Mr. Simon encouraged individuals to remain by indicating they did not need to leave the site.*

Regarding the first issue, our outreach staff have significant experience and training in outreach work. They try to stay current on all shelter, housing and treatment options. If they don't possess the correct info, we ask that your team share it with them. In my conversations with the SPC outreach team this week, they indicated a desire to work with your DHS team, but often don't feel included or provided necessary info. Communication has diminished, and we commit to improving the situation from our end.

In terms of Mr. Simon, encouraging clients to decline housing and/or treatment options is NOT ACCEPTABLE. Megan and Savanna immediately discussed this accusation with him this week. He assured us that he would never encourage a person to decline housing/treatment. Either way, we will work with him to ensure he follows all outreach best practices and policies.

In conclusion, we appreciate your efforts to improve these issues and coordinate our outreach teams. We will continue to engage your team to maximize our work with everyone experiencing literal homelessness.

Sincerely,
Anthony D'Agostino, Ed.D
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From: Scoggin, Yusef <scogginy@stlouis-mo.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 3:19 PM
To: D'Agostino, Anthony <adagostino@stpatrickcenter.org>; Bryson, Jared <Jared.Bryson@ccstl.org>; Nancy Cross <crossn@stlouis-mo.gov>
Subject: Outreach Interference

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Good Afternoon Anthony,

Thanks for the discussion yesterday morning regarding outreach at the Riverfront encampment. I trust further discussions with SPC Outreach staff have occurred subsequent to our dialogue. Engagement at this site has been ongoing for several months with partner organizations focused on connecting individuals to services and shelter/housing placement. Such efforts have been centered on providing immediate assistance for those encountered and to minimize the number of individuals present during any potential site closure. Completion of resourcing of individuals and securing the site is anticipated to occur Friday, March 10, 2023. As discussed, the actions of SPC Outreach staff on Wednesday, March 8th were counterproductive to ensuring significantly vulnerable individuals are connected to the services that would address the various challenges they face.

The Department of Human Services along with several partner organizations have been engaging those at the Riverfront Encampment for several months and during the few days leading up to Tuesday, March 7th had successfully transitioned fourteen

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individuals into in-patient substance use treatment, shelter, etc. There were nine individuals planned for transition to various accommodations on Wednesday, but upon engagement by SPC Outreach staff were no longer interested in accessing services or placement. Deterring individuals from entering placement, treatment or other services that would address chronic homelessness is not in alignment with what is in the best interest of those experiencing hardship nor are such actions representative of the mission of partner organizations funded by the City of St. Louis. There have been multiple overdose deaths and other detrimental activities occurring at the Riverfront encampment with the most recent overdose death having occurred on Saturday, March 4th. Discouraging or indicating to unhoused individuals at the site that DHS staff and partner organization weren't being truthful about the immediate resources is irresponsible and harmful to the system of care for those we collectively serve.

After discussing the specific actions of Yitzy Simon, SPC Outreach staff, I spoke directly to the Mr. Simon and was subsequently contacted by Savanna Goossens, Outreach Manager, providing further detail regarding Mr. Simon's behavior. Mr. Simon acknowledged he did not engage with the DHS or other partner organization staff members at the site to clearly understand the resources being offered to unhoused individuals. The engagement by SPC Outreach staff was not informed and incorrectly described in-patient treatment along with other shelter/housing placement options offered as not immediate. Additionally, Mr. Simon encouraged individuals to remain by indicating they did not need to leave the site. While official closure of the site occurs Friday, March 10th, it is the intent of ongoing outreach to ensure services are offered and connected as soon as possible. Separation of personal philosophical advocacy beliefs and the tangible realities of the outreach engagement and services offered are critical. Vulnerable populations with significant and persistent behavioral health and/or substance use disorder are best served when representation of an organization is not compromised by personal conflicts. Unfortunately, this is not the first time SPC Outreach staff have engaged in unprofessional behaviors that don't serve the interest of the system of care for the most vulnerable. Mr. Simon's prior aggressive and unprofessional behavior when engaging the DHS Deputy Director at our Office and engagement of a funded organization's CEO at a tiny home site are other incidents for which I've been made aware.

The City of St. Louis DHS appreciates partnership focused on delivering the highest quality of supports for the most vulnerable. I'd ask that a review of SPC Outreach staff engagement be conducted to ensure training, resource awareness, specific goals/outcomes and monitoring of in the field behaviors align with best practices. We look forward to a resolution of these aforementioned challenges and future coordination that centers positively impacting the lives of those we serve.

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